3: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Again, charm medicine may be contained in various articles which are also generally worn round the neck. The teeth and claws of the beasts of prey are so employed, generally arranged in pairs bound together so as to form a crescent and suspended from a string. The teeth of crocodiles, lions, leopards, and the claws of the same beasts and of some large birds of prey are thus employed. The teeth etc., are in themselves charms against injury, probably against what one might call homologous injury. The idea of stuffing them with medicine is probably a secondary consideration, a process of fortification of the charm so that its use comes to have a more powerful influence. It is interesting to see of late years that the native, recognizing the decorative value of these crescent-shaped amulets, has begun to copy them in lead and ivory. A series of these of graduated size is worn as a necklace by women.

When a medicine-man is consulted, part payment is made in advance, "payment to go and dig medicine (roots)." The rest of the payment is made when the cure is effected. Should a patient not be satisfied with his treatment and wish to consult some other medicine-man, he pays to the first a quarter of the fee he would have paid if his cure had been effected; this is called "paying him to get his medicine away." Unless this is done, should he recover later, he will be liable to claims for full fees from all of the medicine-men he has consulted; each will say his own medicine has gone on acting and has effected the cure. A medicine-man may take a case he is treating into his own house.

In prescribing medicine, very particular instructions are given with an embargo on certain things which may or may not have some use and significance. A medicine-man in 1891 at Malemya's, who inoculated every one in the forehead with bullet proof medicine, said that no one must step across a *mwiri* (pestle for pounding grain), and no one must eat the leaves of the sweet potato.

A medicine-man always partakes of part of the decoction he is giving to a patient to show that it is harmless; I think these preparations are mostly inactive. I should hate to sample all the castor oil I have prescribed, though many natives have had suspicions about me when I have not done so.

Poisons. Though there are a large number of species in this country, both vegetable and animal, from which poison might be extracted, those that have gained any reputation among natives and have come under my observation are but few in number. *Mwai* (*Mwabvi* Chin.) "the ordeal poison," is the bark of *Erythrophloeum guineense*. The natives distinguish two varieties of *mwai*, the two trees differing slightly in leaf, flower and bark; *mwai* is the *Erythrophloeum guineense*, the second variety known as *mperanjilu* is doubtless an allied species. *Mwai* is the poison employed in the poison ordeal.[1] It is administered in a poisonous dose as a decoction of the bark, recovery or otherwise depending on whether or not the poison is voided by vomiting. Natives give as the symptoms headache, giddiness, disturbances of vision, vomiting and purging, with slowing of heart beat. *Mper-*

[1] Vide infra, p. 296.

3: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Witch-medicine. The making of medicine against people has been shown to occupy an essential place in *usoni*, and it plays an important part in all occultism. So by insensible grades, the ordinary use of drugs in common diseases is reached, though it is probable that very much greater faith is placed in a packet of burnt roots put under the floor of the house than in the efficacy of any concoction taken by mouth.

There is a general belief that by medicine extra ability verging into supernatural power can be acquired. This power in a general sense is represented by the word *ukoma* and a man so possessed is spoken of as *mundu jua komala*. The desire for increased power may be a perfectly natural one, such as a desire for influence and popularity as a chief, or on the other hand, the power of *usoni* may be aimed at, or again, the knowledge of magic medicine for thieving or for any other practice. *Ukoma* is, therefore, a relative matter. The necessary medicine or initiation into the understanding of magic can be purchased from persons already practitioners, the honest herbalist merging by imperceptible degrees into the most criminal witch-doctor. A single practitioner may prescribe a charcoal dressing for an ulcer, exorcise an evil spirit by a vapor bath, sell medicine to enable the buyer to win a case at court, arrange medicine on a pathway to act as a selective love potion, or prescribe a drug to change a man into a lion.

Deserving of special mention are the people who thieve by the aid of medicine which they have either purchased or prepared themselves. Such a man is called *chitaka* and the medicine *mtela wa chitaka*. The active principle of this medicine is said to be prepared from the tail of a hyaena, an animal which is said to be able to enter a house where people are sleeping and kill and carry off the fowls without waking the occupants. The medicine is often carried in a hyaena's tail. The *chitaka* is supposed to approach the house he would rob and chewing some medicine in the mouth, gently blow towards it to put everyone to sleep. The door is supposed to unfasten itself and the thief is free to take what he wishes. He is even said to kill, cook, and eat food in the house while the inmates remain unconscious. A special characteristic of the *chitaka* is that whatever he lays his hands on in the house he must remove, though he does not want it, so that in the morning many unwieldy, useless objects may be found outside the hut.

There are many other magic medicines. One of these, *luunga*, if introduced into a village, will cause the illness and death of some inmate. Anyone handling the body of the sick man or the corpse after death, sickens and dies until the whole village is wiped out. There is a man serving a life sentence now at the Central Prison, Zomba, who was convicted of having caused the death of many people in a village in Angoniland. He is said cheerfully to have admitted the power of his medicine.

Medicine made from a cousin is supposed to be efficacious in various ways. The blood of a cousin is instilled into the ear for otorrhoea. Drinking the water which has been used by a cousin to wash his face relieves intestinal colic. Medicine is made from the hairs of the beard of a cousin or from an *mbile* and used for chest trouble.

7: Hetherwick M-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FT7 Yao FT7

evidence. On the appointed day she dances, *kupina masoka*, to dance the spirits, or *kuswesela*, to rave or prophecy, and in the ravings of the dance she calls out the name of some party who is afterwards accused of being the *mauri* or witch. Followed by a crowd of excited spectators she dances through the village spear in hand, stopping here and there to dig up charms or medicines which the supposed witch has buried in the ground as the instruments of his occult practices. It is only in cases of supposed special difficulty, or when the magnitude of the supposed crimes demands that special measures be adopted for their detection, that the services of such a witch detective are called in. In ordinary cases these appeals are made to the divining oracle who consults his "lots" as a means of discovering crimes of this nature.

Among the Yaos the human being is believed to be the sole possessor of a *lisoka*. I have been unable to discover any trace of a theory that the *lisoka* may pass into any animal or inanimate object and thus confer upon it the nature or power of a fetish. Such belief is cherished among the Angoni and Achewa tribes to the westward by Nyasa and the upper Shire River, and the intelligent Yao is aware of this, but he states that among his people no such belief exists. Even charms which have the effect of healing or warding off disease, or of protecting the wearer from war or wild beasts or other danger by land or water, are supposed to possess this power without any idea of their being possessed by a *lisoka* or other spirit influence. The nearest approach to such a theory is in the case of certain powerful "doctors" who have obtained special medicine by means of which, at death, they can transform themselves into lions, leopards, crocodiles, etc. Lepers also are sometimes supposed to become hippopotami. But both of these cases must be regarded rather as transmutations of body than transmigrations of soul.

It will be thus seen that the nature of the human *lisoka* is closely allied to that of the *masoka*, which are the inspiring agents in madness and in the ecstasy of prophecy or incantation. What the origin of these inspiring *masoka* is, or to whom they belonged when in bodily life, the Yao holds no theory. He is content to accept them as they are, *masoka igoyo*, "Just *masoka* and nothing more," as he says.

It is, however, when we follow the disembodied *lisoka* after death and consider its position and power in the other world that we find ourselves in a region of higher spiritual activities.

In dreams or in fainting fits the *lisoka* leaves the body but only to return to it with the awakening consciousness. At death, however, it leaves its earthly abode never to return. It is now spoken of as having gone to *mulungu* or *mlungu*. This word, which lies at the basis of all Yao theories of the place of the soul after death, will be dealt with later on as regards its derivation and connections in the Bantu family of languages. In its actual use it bears two significations.

I. The word *mulungu* is in the first instance applied to the human soul or *lisoka* after death when it is considered as an inhabitant of the spirit world. Even in life a man, when he meets with any piece of good luck, will be heard to say, "It's my *mulungu*," as if his soul had an influence in determining the character of his

10: Sanderson D-5 (ca. 1920)1922 FT7 Yao FT7

796 THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS THOROUGLY "SPRING-CLEANED", ALL RUBBISH
[364] is swept up, the ground round the houses is hoed clean, and the interiors remudded. Ceremonial beer is brewed by the head-wife of the chief, and after this has been drunk the ashes of the fire used in the brewing are carefully collected and taken to a *malekano* ("cross-roads," or "diverging of paths") where they are deposited.
[783] The chief, as representative of his people, bathes in special medicated water, a
[624] decoction made from the bark of *ng'wenya* and *mbawa*, and the root of *mpingo*.
[622] This completes the ordinary annual ceremony, at which new fire is not made.

On certain special occasions a more elaborate ritual is carried out; such occasions are the death of a chief, a threatened epidemic of infectious disease, a murder (especially by shooting) and the frequent occurrence of quarrels in the village.

In such circumstances, in addition to the ordinary *pyajila* ceremony described above, the porridge sticks of the whole village are renewed and all fires extinguished. The discarded sticks and all ashes of the old fires are carried to the meeting of paths, where the former are stuck upright in the ground and the ashes piled together;
[372] this is done in procession, all the people taking part. On their return to the village new fire is made by friction by either the chief or his younger brother—usually the latter; fire procured in any other way would nullify the proceedings. Finally
[783] all the people bathe in the medicated water used only by the chief at the ordinary ceremony.

751 In addition to this special form of the *pyajila* ceremony, another rite is sometimes
796 performed after the occurrence of a murder or as prophylactic against the spread of epidemic disease. The doctor first makes a kind of trough (*lukungwa*) from the bark of *mtondoroko* or *mpapa*, and procures a *chichiliko* (or *chipengule*) basket—used as a strainer in salt-making. Having collected his medicines he proceeds to the bank of the stream near the usual bathing-place of the village and digs a shallow hole, in which he places the basket; in this he puts the leaves of a certain thorny shrub and covers the whole with the trough, which is banked up with earth so as to be perfectly firm. He then puts his "medicines" into the trough; these are, first, the head of an iron hammer and a piece of slag, both from a smelting furnace. On top of these he puts pieces of the root of a certain tree which has many and particularly sharp thorns, and bits of bark from two trees peculiar for having very straight stems. Having distributed these evenly along the floor of the trough, he fills it with water and then proceeds to construct an arch over the end of the trough furthest from the stream. Two long poles, cut from a kind of tree particularly rich in sap, are planted in the ground, one at each side of the trough and close to it; these are bent over towards each other, and fastened together by means of a strip of their own bark. A bamboo is now planted alongside each, and similarly tied to its fellow. During all these preparations and throughout the ceremony it is essential that the doctor has no knots in any part of his clothing.

The preparations are now complete, and when all the fires in the village have been extinguished the people go in procession to the spot where the doctor awaits them. All must be poorly clad and must have no metal about them.

[622] The chief opens the ceremony. He steps into the trough and taking some of
[769] the medicated water therefrom in his hands he rinses his mouth with it. He then offers a prayer to the spirits of his ancestors, first stating the emergency and detailing the measures which are to be taken to deal with it (new fires, sweeping, discard of porridge-sticks and shaving). The prayer over, he splashes the water in the trough over his body and passes through the arch, first throwing some gift (beads or, in more modern times, money) into the trough. These gifts, presumably
[756] intended as an offering to the spirits, are the perquisites of the doctor, and everybody is supposed to contribute in turn.